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STATE FOR EAP, EAP/MTS

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TAGS: PREL PHUM KN RP

SUBJECT: SECRETARY ROMULO ENGAGES NORTH KOREA ON ARF, SIX PARTY TALKS

Classified By: Pol/C Scott Bellard, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) During a June 16-21 visit to the Republic of Korea, the People's Republic of China, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to promote productive participation in this year's ASEAN Regional Forum in Manila in early August, Foreign Secretary Romulo met in Pyongyang with Kim Yong Nam, President of the Supreme People's Assembly and with recently-appointed Foreign Minister Pak Ui Chun. Secretary Romulo was the first Philippine Foreign Secretary and the highest ranking Philippine official ever to visit the DPRK, according to press reports.

¶2. (C) DFA officials indicated to poloff on June 21 that Romulo intended to reiterate to the North Koreans President Arroyo's offer to utilize the ASEAN-related meetings in Manila in late July and early August to conduct a round of the Six-Party Talks, perhaps at the Ministerial level. Romulo reportedly added that "the Philippines, in its capacity as ASEAN chairman, stands ready to extend the necessary assistance to the Six-Party Talks stakeholders to help ensure that the process is moved further forward." North Korean Foreign Minister Pak accepted in principle the invitation to attend the ARF. DFA officials did not yet have a more complete read-out on the North Korean responses, however. Romulo is expected back in Manila on June 22, and DFA officials promised a fuller read-out as it becomes available.

¶3. (C) Comment: The Philippines, both on a bilateral basis and as ASEAN Chair, is keen to be as helpful as possible in encouraging the North Koreans in particular, and Six-Party Talks participants more generally, to make progress on resolving the North Korean nuclear issue through diplomacy and dialogue. Romulo reportedly highly appreciated the opportunity to talk with A/S Hill before Romulo's trip to Pyongyang, which he undertook despite illness.

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